

MOTOR COORDINATION ACTIVITIES: ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING (ADLS)

TRAFFIC SCHOOL

Every day participants must navigate the world in very physical ways. They go through doorways; they make turns. They hurry to catch up with friends; they slow down so as not to spill their coffee. They step over mud puddles and curbs. They change directions and pace. All of these situations challenge their balance. Staying active means maintaining the ability to navigate in normal situations. The challenges of ABLE Bodies' Traffic School include Change of Pace; Red Light, Green Light; and all kinds of fun ways to practice changes in pace and direction. You can do the activities separately or mix them up as participants improve. Lengthen the time spent walking to build cardiorespiratory endurance. Traffic school can make a great WalkAbout, too (see chapter 8).

Benefits »

- Practices everyday challenges in walking.
- Integrates many components of balance.
- Builds endurance in a fun and social way.

Set It Up »

- You need only a large room, clear of tripping hazards. Allow room for participants to spread out, change directions, or form a London Bridge.
- Props are optional. However, you can create some props, such as direction arrows, cones, a stop sign, a green light, a red light, and a yellow light.
- Plan ahead for the challenges you'll use. The activity will go better if you have a list.
- Plan the flow of traffic and the order of challenges.
- Anticipate traffic flow and walkers.
- Pull out your drill sergeant's voice.

How to Do It »

Have participants line up on one side of the room. For greater challenge, split the group and put half at each end of your room—they will be walking past each other to further complicate the challenge. Stand where you can face the group and they can see your hand signals as well as hear your voice.

Change of Pace

Explain to participants you will be asking them to walk across the room at varying speeds. Their mission is to follow your commands (smile when you say that) to slow down or speed up. They should change pace, accelerating or decelerating as quickly as they safely can. Use the following cues:

- Get ready, get set, go!
- Walk fast.
- Walk slow.
- Walk very slow, even slower than that.
- Speed up, walk fast, faster.
- Slow down, down, down, and stop.

Red Light, Green Light

Explain that when you announce or signal a green light, their mission is to cross from one side of the room to the other as quickly as they can. When you announce or signal a red light, they should stop as quickly as they safely can. You may also use a yellow caution for slowing down. The object of the game, of course, is to see who gets across the room first. Speak loudly and clearly, facing the group.

- Ready, set, go!
- Go carefully!
- Red light! (Hold up your arms or the red signal.)
- Green light! (Bring your arms down or hold up the green signal.)
- Violators will be prosecuted! (Or whatever—make it fun.)
- Caution (yellow light). Slowly lower your hands, palms down, like saying “whoa, slow down!”
- Blinking red light (stop, go, stop, go).

Continue until they cross the room. Make times between lights unpredictable. Have some fun!

Changes in Direction

Explain to participants that they will be following commands to make turns left or right. There may be a traffic circle to go around (this could be a small group of chairs you have set up for them to circle). Only do left and right turns at first, and do not ask them to turn while walking fast. They should comply as quickly as they safely can with the traffic challenges. Speak loudly and clearly, facing the group.

- Start walking.
- Walk faster.
- Slower.
- Turn right and keep walking.
- Speed up.
- Slow down, turn left, and stop.
- Go around a traffic circle at the end of the room.
- Keep going.



Window Shopping

This activity is simply walking with head turns. As participants walk across the room, they window shop—every four to six steps, have them look left or right. Watch them for signs of getting dizzy. Let them know it could happen and if it does, they should stop and get your help. Use the following cues.

- Start walking.
- Look over there—is that a donut shop with the lights on?
- Look to the left—there are some nice dresses and suits at that store.

- ⊙ Look at your neighbor.
- ⊙ Look down “Did someone walk their dog this morning, yuck!, step over that!”
- ⊙ There’s a shoe store on the right – is that your size?
- ⊙ It’s a bird, it’s a plane, it’s Superman! (It’s a cue to look up)
- ⊙ Keep walking and Window Shopping.

Pivot Turns and Corners

This advanced variation involves pivots and walking into and out of corners or other tight spots. This activity may be especially helpful, though difficult, for participants with Parkinson’s disease (PD). Sometimes PD participants freeze and cannot take a step when they walk into corners or through doorways. Use the following cues.

- ⊙ Walk ahead.
- ⊙ Walk faster.
- ⊙ Turn left and keep walking.
- ⊙ Do a pivot and keep walking.
- ⊙ Keep walking. Pivot and stop.
- ⊙ Walk to a corner of the room.
- ⊙ Walk right into the corner and pivot out of the corner.
- ⊙ Walk away fast.
- ⊙ Walk slow, slower, very slowly.
- ⊙ Can you stop with just one foot on the ground?

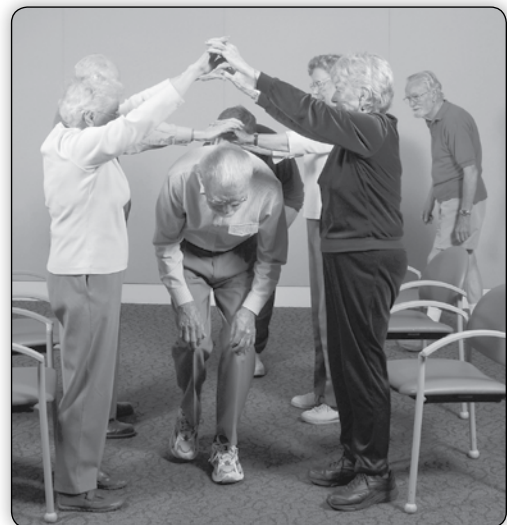
London Bridge

This intermediate activity gives participants something to duck underneath. It’s a balance challenge to lower their frame over their feet to pass under a bridge-like obstacle.

The bridge can be made of participants holding their arms up as people go under. Ask several participants to form a bridge by holding their arms over a pathway. These bridge tenders can then have some fun lowering or raising the bridge as they see fit for their buddies walking underneath. The bridge could also be a cloth or a bar you set up ahead of time. If you have an actual overhanging stairway or other piece of architecture, they can duck under that, too. Variety is the spice of good balance training.

Prepare the people who will be going under the bridge. Before they duck, cue them to brace their core, bend their knees, and drop their hips back. Demonstrate this for them and then have them practice these mechanics before they begin. Use the following cues.

- ⊙ Group A: Form a bridge!
- ⊙ Be a sturdy bridge. Your friends are going under.
 - Feet are set, knees soft, abs braced, and ribs lifted.
 - Join hands at the top.
- ⊙ Group B: Under the bridge we go!
 - Feet are wide set, knees bent, and abs braced.
 - Lower yourself and start walking under the bridge.
 - Good job! Keep moving until the whole troop passes through.



- ⦿ Group B, be the bridge; group A, get ready!
- ⦿ A participant who doesn't want to go under could be a toll collector at the bridge entrance. Each traveler must high five him before going under.

Traffic Circles

Traffic Circles are just another way to be creative while lightly jostling your participants a bit. They can be just a few sets of circles of chairs that they circle around; or the activity can turn into Opposing Circles and High Fives (see page 255). You might also create traffic jams. In traffic jams, people walk close, starting, stopping, accelerating, slowing, moving right, moving left, and maybe even waving, yelling, or talking on their cell phones. Be careful and keep it safe for your group's ability.

Keep It Safe »

Be sure to speak clearly, facing the group. Use hand and voice commands together so that your instructions are clear. Many of your participants are hard of hearing. It's perfectly okay for anyone to opt out at any time. Find ways to make opting out easy and not embarrassing. Give alternatives, or have someone less able help you in some way. For instance, they could stand by their walker and be a toll collector, whose hand each person must tap. Explain that slow traffic happens and others must deal with that too. Pass on the right.

Live It »

Life is full of surprises, just like traffic. There will always be a need to make changes in pace and direction and time for window shopping. Practice helps participants be ready, willing, and ABLE.